



# Tree Mortality Task Force

## Two Year Review and Status of Executive Order Directives 2015-2017



In October of 2015, Governor Edmund G. Brown declared a state of emergency due to the unprecedented levels of dead and dying trees in the State of California. In response to his Executive Order the Tree Mortality Task Force (TMTF) was created. During the winter 2016-2017, record-breaking rains brought much needed relief to California after a 5-year drought, however the State continued to experience major tree die-off. In April 2017, Governor Brown rescinded the drought emergency, but maintained support for the on-going work addressing the drought's long-term impacts. The TMTF continues to collaborate and make progress on the 19 directives set forth in the original tree mortality emergency declaration from 2015.

### Partnerships



In early 2017, Caltrans and CAL FIRE collaborated to design and produce door hangers used to notify landowners that Caltrans contractors would be on their property to identify and mark hazardous trees. These marked trees would be removed to reduce the risk to people traveling along state highways. The door hanger template was later adopted by Placer County for its hazardous tree removal operations. This is just one example of how federal, state and local agencies partner through the TMTF to provide more resources, assistance, and information to stakeholders.

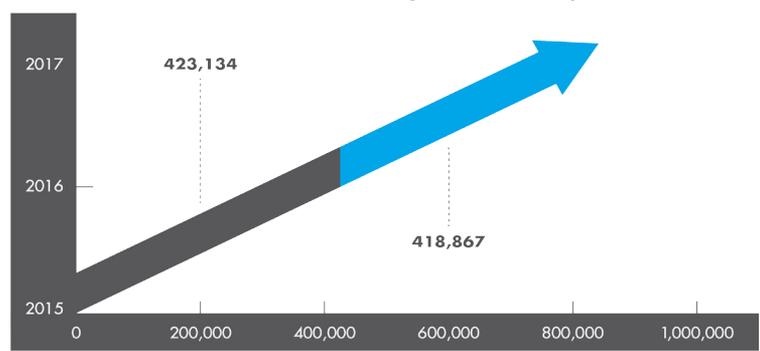
### Innovation



Dead trees have found new life in the form of bioenergy, furniture, and even art. This year PG&E donated over 100 dead trees to the team that designed and built the 2017 Burning Man's Temple. The temple project provided a new avenue to discuss tree mortality impacts and how our forests are changing.

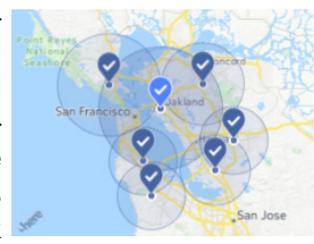
### Triage

Since 2015, over 842,000 trees have been removed or felled within high-hazard areas through the coordinated efforts of local, state, federal agencies and public utilities.



### Urban Outreach

Tree mortality doesn't just affect rural residents, but urban populations as well. To increase awareness about tree mortality and its impacts, an urban outreach campaign was implemented in the Bay Area between June and July of 2017. Over 2.6 million impressions across 4 counties were made through digital platforms like Pandora Radio, Facebook and website ads. Additional outreach campaigns have been completed in urban areas to raise awareness about hazardous trees along roadways, near critical infrastructure, and in forests where people recreate.



### Grants Awarded



Over \$21 million has been awarded to projects aimed to protect watersheds, remove dead trees, and restore our forests. These grants have supported smaller, non-profit community organizations that have augmented the work being done by TMTF agencies. An example of this is California Fire Safe Council's (CFSC) Grants Clearinghouse program. By leveraging a newly-

awarded \$1.7 million U.S. Forest Service grant the CFSC will be able to award grants to several smaller projects within high-hazard counties.

### Planting for the Future

The TMTF is being proactive about the future of our forests. Free workshops were held by forest management experts to help landowners understand their options for reforestation.



To ensure that landowners have the resources needed, CAL FIRE partnered with the El Dorado Resource Conservation District (RCD) to place a speculative seed order to be ready for 2018 spring planting. Over 80,000 seedlings were grown at U.S. Forest Service's El Dorado Nursery and are available for purchase through the RCD.

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1 CAL FIRE, the California Natural Resources Agency, Caltrans and the California Energy Commission will identify areas of the State that represent high-hazard zones for wildfire and falling trees.

**Completed with Updates as Needed**

2 State agencies, utilities, and local governments will undertake efforts to remove dead or dying trees in these high-hazard zones that threaten power lines, roads, other evacuation corridors and critical infrastructure.

**Ongoing**

3 CAL FIRE shall identify potential storage locations for removed trees across impacted areas in partnership with federal agencies and local jurisdictions.

**Completed with Updates as Needed**

4 Caltrans will seek emergency federal funding to clear hazard trees that threaten state highways and roads.

**Completed**

5 Department of General Services will identify State facilities and Caltrans shall identify highway and road corridors, where woodchips produced from dead trees can be used as mulch.

**Completed**

6 State agencies will make available portable equipment such as large volume masticators, chippers and portable saw mills in high-hazard zones to aid local entities in tree removal efforts.

**Completed**

7 The California Air Resources Board and CAL FIRE shall work together with federal land managers and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to expand the practice of prescribed burns and increase the number of allowable days on a temporary basis to burn tree waste that has been removed in high-hazard zones.

**Completed**

8 The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) will utilize its authority to extend contracts on existing forest bioenergy facilities receiving feedstock from high-hazard zones.

**Completed**

9 The CPUC will increase capacity for forest biomass generation by expediting actions for qualifying facilities in two of its biomass-oriented programs, BioMat and ReMAT.

**Partially Completed**

10 The CPUC will work to reduce delays between utilities and facilities in reaching agreement on interconnection terms for new and expanded biomass energy facilities.

**Ongoing**

11 The California Energy Commission will prioritize grant funding from the Electric Program Investment Charge for woody biomass-to-energy technology development and deployment, consistent with direction from the CPUC.

**Ongoing**

12 CAL FIRE, the California Energy Commission and other appropriate agencies will work with land managers to estimate biomass feedstock availability, storage locations, and volumes that may be available for use as bioenergy feedstock at existing and new facilities.

**Partially Completed**

13 CAL FIRE and the California Energy Commission will work with bioenergy facilities that accept forest biomass from high-hazard zones to identify potential funds to help offset higher feedstock costs.

**Partially Completed**

14 Cal Recycle and CAL FIRE will work with affected counties and existing wood products markets to determine feasibility of expanded wood products markets in California.

**Ongoing**

15 For purposes of carrying out directives 1, 2, and 5 through 8, Division 13 (commencing with section 21000) of the Public Resources Code and regulations adopted pursuant to that Division are hereby suspended.

**Completed with Updates as Needed**

16 In order to ensure that equipment and services necessary for emergency response can be procured quickly, state contracts, including, but not limited to, advertising and competitive bidding requirements, are hereby suspended as necessary.

**Completed**

17 For purposes of this Proclamation, Chapter 3.5 (commencing with section 11340) of Part 1 of Division 3 of the Government Code is suspended for the development and adoption of regulations or guidelines needed to carry out the provisions in this Order.

**Completed with Updates as Needed**

18 The Office of Emergency Services shall provide local government assistance as appropriate under the authority of the California Disaster Assistance Act, and California Code of Regulations.

**Ongoing**

19 State agencies shall actively monitor tree removal efforts directed by this Proclamation to assess their effectiveness in protecting forest health and strengthening forest resilience.

**Ongoing**





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### Collaboration and Common Goals

Even with record-breaking rainfall this past winter, and the drought declared over, more than 102 million trees remain dead across the state. These dead trees continue to be a public safety hazard when near roads, communities, and critical infrastructure, and threaten the health and resiliency of the state's watersheds. The TMTF continues to collaborate on the efficient use of resources to protect public safety and build consensus around science based long-term management strategies for California's forest lands. The work of the TMTF is long from over, but the strong foundation built will continue to be an advantage as members continue to address tree mortality and its impacts.



### Conservation Director, Craig Thomas Sierra Forest Legacy



"The work of the Tree Mortality Task Force has been valuable in not only dealing with the immediate focus of reducing risks to communities by removing hazard trees but also by using long-term resource management tools, such as prescribed fire. Both CAL FIRE and the U.S. Forest Service have significantly increased the pace and scale of prescribed fire as a way to thin out over-stocked understories and lower the fire hazard of surface fuels over time. It is this forward-looking vision that will restore our forests and help prevent damaging wildfires."

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### District 5 Supervisor, Nathan Magsig Fresno County



"The Tree Mortality Task force has provided an essential venue for coordination of response efforts, exchange of ideas, reporting, and accountability for the ongoing statewide response to this incident. Leadership from the Governor's Office, CAL FIRE and OES has helped to ensure County issues are heard and addressed. Monthly coordination of the 10 most impacted counties has resulted in a more effective use of resources and has allowed Counties to share ideas and successes. Fresno County has significant community, power, timber, and recreational resources at risk – I am pleased to see the coordinated statewide effort in support our of response."

### Real Life Collaborations

In the fall of 2016, the Yosemite-Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council received a nearly \$500,000 Prop 1 grant from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to remove insect-and-drought killed trees on an area owned by 23 separate property owners. At the time of the grant, the project area had suffered 80 percent visible bark beetle mortality. With severe tree die-off, landowners worked quickly to remove all the dead trees to reduce impacts on Gentry Creek, a major tributary of the North Fork of the Merced River. Little did that community know that in July 2017, the Detwiler Fire would burn over 81,000 acres. With lives and



properties threatened, the project area became a cornerstone of the firefighting efforts. By removing the dead trees, landowners had created a fuel break allowing firefighters to safely make a stand against the fire and stop the fire from entering major parts of the community of Greeley Hill. While the original goal of the project was to protect the watershed in the Sierra Nevada, the unexpected benefits highlight how much can be accomplished when everyone works together with a common goal of creating healthier, more resilient forests.

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